



# Developing School Decision-Making Teams

*"Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For indeed, that's all who ever have." —Margaret Mead*

## Why go this route?

- Because better decisions will be made for your students if your school has effective decision-making teams in place. On the other hand, where decision-making is confused or not well-shared, people have a hard time concentrating on teaching and learning.
- Because good school based decision-making has a direct effect on student achievement.
- Because time and effort will be used more effectively if carefully chosen teams are working on a well-defined project, and know how they relate to other decision-makers.
- Because pre-established teams assure that all stakeholders have input where appropriate.

## You'll know you've arrived when...

- You have task and decision-making teams set up for identified areas of need in your school.
- Issues and concerns flow through the team process.
- All stakeholders have enough input that they don't need to be a part of every decision.
- Teams are using a clear decision-making process.
- You have a way of testing the effectiveness of your action plans.

## Construction Zone

### It's about **TIME**

- Initial set-up meeting (1–2 hours)
- Next meeting to establish guidelines and expectations (1–2 hours)
- First team meeting (1–2 hours)


### Potential **COSTS**

*Minimal funds involved.  
Mainly time and materials.*

- Staff time
- Snacks (if desired)

## The Process

*A step-by-step guide  
to developing school  
decision-making teams*

**NOTE:** Steps marked with a  are accompanied by one or more inserts, included in this packet.

### 1 Consider common school-based decision-making teams to see which ones seem most important in your situation.

- School Improvement Team/Steering Committee  
See INSERT A for Step 1 for guidelines from the Michigan Improvement Planning Process Guide (MI-Plan).
- Child Study Team  
See INSERT B for Step 1 for guidelines adapted from Grand Rapids Public Schools.
- Parent Involvement/Parent & Teacher Organization/Association  
Refer to MI-Map Packet 1:2 *“Organizing Family Involvement”* or connect with North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) for more information on parent involvement at: <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/timely/upiover.htm>. PTA and PTO links are also available from that site.
- Curriculum Team (specific areas)  
See INSERT C for Step 1 for guidelines.
- Behavior Management Team  
Refer to MI-Map packet 3:4 *“Developing a “School-wide Behavior Code.”*
- School Climate/Culture Team  
Refer to MI-Map packet 3:1 *“Developing a Culture Committee.”*

### 2 Develop a “charge” for the team.

See INSERT A for Step 2 for an agenda for a planning meeting, which will lead you through being clear about what the purpose of the team will be, who the stakeholders are that need to be members of the team and if this group will be long-standing or temporary. Record your decisions in a “charge” that the team can refer to over the term of its work. INSERT B for Step 2 is a blank “charge” for you to follow or to adapt.

### 3 Prepare for the first meeting.

Determine who will chair or initially chair this team. Work with this person (or designate a person from the planning team) to write the agenda for the first team meeting and invite the participants. Build the agenda by choosing from and assigning time to activities in Step 4. Allocate time to your chosen activities, using INSERT for Step 3.

### 4 Hold the first meeting.

- Review the purpose with the group.
- Develop a timeline for when the decision/goal of the group will be met.
- Establish meeting procedures and roles. See MI-Map Packet 8:2 *“Strengthening Your Team”*
- Decide on the decision-making process that the team will use. See MI-Map Packet 8:2
- Agree on a calendar—how often and when the group will meet.
- Determine (or explain if it’s already in the “charter”) if the group will be permanent or will only meet for a specified period of time and who the group will report to.
- Decide on a process for reporting to stakeholders. See INSERT for Step 4.

## Getting more mileage from setting up decision-making teams

*How developing decision-making teams benefits your school in regard to the following initiatives:*

### **No Child Left Behind (NCLB)**

- In order to make Adequate Yearly Progress as specified by NCLB, a school will need to have effective decision-making teams in place to evaluate student data and make effective plans for improvement.

### **Education YES!**

- The Indicators of Instructional Quality in the *Education YES!* report focus on the processes the school uses to improve the quality of instruction provided to its students.
- Family involvement is a component of learning opportunities under *Education YES!* Schools will need to demonstrate that they involved every family in a meaningful way at their school.

### **MI-Plan**

- MI-Plan requires that Michigan schools create involved School Improvement Teams that include representatives from all stakeholder groups. A chart is included in MI-Plan to help schools develop their steering committee, including all stakeholders. This step is part of assessing a school's readiness to benefit from the MI-Plan School Improvement process.



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## Resources

### Articles

#### ***“Making Teams Productive”***

Gordon J. Myers. Pinnacle.  
June-July, 1995.

#### ***“Teams in the Age of Systems”***

Peter Scholtes. The Handbook of Best Team Practices. Amherst, MA: HRD Press, 1996.

### Books

#### ***101 Ways To Make Meetings Active***

Mel Selberman, Kathy Clark.  
Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer. 1999.

Say good-bye to boring meetings. These ideas introduce fun and energy, and will have team members looking forward to getting together.

#### ***Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In”***

Roger Fisher and William Ury.  
New York: Viking Press, 1991.

This practical, positive book is about how to look below seeming disagreements to find what shared interests exist, so that the two sides can cooperate in finding creative ways past their disagreement.

#### ***“The Wisdom of Teams”***

Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith.  
New York: HarperCollings Publishers, Inc, 1993.

The authors dismiss touchy-feely “pseudo-teams” in favor of productive, focused ones which “gel” because they face together a specific, out-come-defined challenge.

### People

#### **Specialists**

Most Intermediate School Districts have a specialist working with schools on shared decision making in their service areas.

#### **Coaches**

The *Alliance for Building Capacity in Schools* website lists coaches whose training has been provided by Michigan State University and supported by the Michigan Department of Education. Some are active in working with team process in Michigan schools. Please visit:

[www.abcscoaches.org](http://www.abcscoaches.org)

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